

Interview with Judith Sparlin, Chairperson of the Health and Wellness Ministry at Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church, Glenshaw PA

Interviewer: Pastor Ellen Lundie, Christian Education Network of the ELCA

What is the Health and Wellness Ministry Team?

The Health & Wellness Team (H&W Team) began at Bethlehem in February 2010. At that time, there was a workshop held at our congregation where a representative of our synod spoke on the work of health and wellness ministries at the synod level. We were inspired to make a new Health and Wellness committee for our community. Currently, the core team is made of individuals who have backgrounds in health professions or an interest in health and wellness living like an associate professor who taught pathophysiology to graduate nursing students, a math teacher interested in healthy living, exercise and nutritional eating, a medical assistant and director of a university health center, and a registered nurse with bachelor's and master's degrees. Other healthcare professionals in the congregation have stepped up to handle such services as blood pressure readings.

What is the Health and Wellness Ministry Team's mission?

The Health & Wellness Ministry's mission is to seek to be an extension of Christ's ministry of healing by providing resources, education and support for the body, mind, and spirit of our congregation and our community. In addition to many other ministries that this committee endeavors to serve, we have provided brochures on drug and alcohol awareness and recovery through the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependency. The committee uses the congregation's newsletter to feature monthly articles on well-being, disease and disorders, and mental health. Most articles have a link to a source and more information. Our mental health articles have included:

- What is 988? National Suicide and Crisis Lifeline
- How to Deal With Stress and Anxiety
- Late Life Depression
- How to Beat the Post Holiday Blues
- The Opioid Crisis: What Can We Do?
- How To Deal With Stress and Anxiety

What was the conversation like that led to the congregation having Narcan in the building?

Following a H&W Team meeting, H&W presented the prospect of having Narcan available in church to the church council. An explanation of what Narcan was and how it works was also presented. The council had time for questions and conversation with members of the committee and an EMT as a resource person. For example, one council member asked about side effects, including the risk if a woman is pregnant. However, it was explained that Narcan replaces opioids on the opioid receptors. Fetal side effects would only occur if the mother had already overdosed, and the fetus was already

suffering from an opioid overdose as well. Following the meeting, Narcan was purchased and placed in a safe and accessible location.

Where can you get Narcan?

- Your local EMS station
- Organizations like <https://nextdistro.org/>
- For purchase from pharmacies

What is training like for administering Narcan?

The H&W team sent a link to a video on how to use Narcan to our staff, council and ushers to review: <https://youtu.be/WnjgrRNMfKM> Currently training on the use of Narcan is included in frequent classes on CPR and how to use an AED hosted in our congregation and facilitated by our local EMS station.